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Lowell W. Paxson / Chairman

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April 21, 2003

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

The Honorable Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Federal Communications Commission
The Portals
445 12th Street, S.W.
Room 8-B115
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Diversity of Media Voices

Dear Commissioner Abernathy:

As a follow-up to my comments last week at the A.G. Edwards luncheon during the NAB Convention, I believe that there is an important consideration that is currently lacking from the Commission's current deliberations over its new media ownership rules.

As we understand those deliberations, the Commission is attempting to formulate a Diversity Index that would measure all media voices in a market and this Diversity Index would then be used by the Commission in reviewing media mergers. At the present time, there appear to be a number of open issues regarding such an Index including how to accurately count media voices, what value might be assigned to the various media for purposes of the Index and how to determine those media that are truly local.

As you and your fellow Commissioners work through the Diversity Index, I believe that you have the unique opportunity to actually increase diversity in a market by increasing the number of local television voices. How can this be accomplished? Quite simply through the adoption of full digital multicast must carry that would require cable carriage of all free over-the-air programming services provided by digital television stations.

As you know, under the PAX Full Digital Multicast Must Carry Proposal, cable systems (consistent with the statutory limitations contained in the 1992 Cable Act) would be required to carry all free over-the-air programming services provided by local digital television stations. This concept has been endorsed by public broadcasters, minority-owned stations, foreign language broadcasters, religious broadcasters and local school systems among others. It would effectively turn a single television station into a source of multiple local voices of programming that, with full cable carriage, would be able to **reach the entire local market**. This opportunity to **actually increase the number of local television voices** in a market is something that must be factored into the Commission's

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*Commissioner

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current consideration of the ownership rules. In fact, it could have a profound effect on the final design of the Diversity Index adopted by the FCC.

As you know, Paxson Communications Corporation has been urging the Commission for over two years to adopt a full digital multicast must carry plan and the impact of that plan on the Commission's development of a Diversity Index provides you and your colleagues with the opportunity to create a win-win situation. A truly accurate and up-to-date gauge of media ownership and the real creation of new, vibrant and local media voices in every market in this country. The public would be the biggest beneficiary.

Very truly yours,

Lowell W. Paxson

Chairman and CEO

Paxson Communications Corporation

cc: The Honorable Michael K. Powell
The Honorable Michael J. Copps
The Honorable Kevin J. Martin
The Honorable Jonathan S. Adelstein